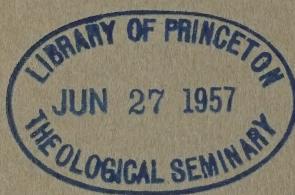


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Introducing Buddhism

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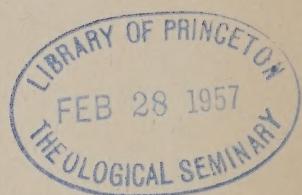
Introducing Buddhism

by Kenneth Scott Latourette

It's impossible to know a man well until you know what he believes. Americans who are concerned about the people of Asia must be acquainted with the religions of Asia. One of the most important of these faiths is Buddhism, which in some form or other holds the allegiance of millions of human beings from the Hawaiian Islands west to Japan, Thailand, Burma, India, and other countries in Asia.

Gautama Buddha, tortured by his yearning for an understanding of life, found enlightenment 2,500 years ago. His wisdom has reached far beyond the boundaries of birthplace and the measures of time. From it have sprung religious beliefs and practices which, varied though they are from country to country, are part of the faith called Buddhism.

Introducing Buddhism is a skillful survey of how one of the world's major religions came to be and what it means to its followers today.



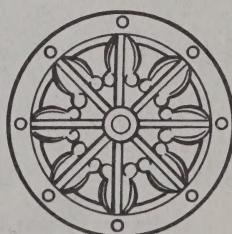
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INTRODUCING BUDDHISM

kenneth scott latourette

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Daibutsu (Great Buddha), the famous bronze figure at Kamakura, Japan, is 50 feet in height and 98 feet in circumference.



BEGINNINGS of a faith

One of the great religions of the world is Buddhism. It is great not only because of its long history, the millions of individuals who have been influenced by it, and the other millions whom to a greater or lesser degree it shapes even now, but also because of its effects on the cultures in which it is an important element. Fully as significantly, it is great because of the profound experience and thought out of which it was born, because of the rich developments in religious faith that it has stimulated, and because of the varied fashions in which it has led men to wrestle with the issues of life and death. As we shall see, for nearly a thousand years it has been a slowly waning force. However, it is still to be reckoned with.

For Christians, Buddhism is of major importance. That is partly because in some countries it still presents obstacles to the spread of the gospel. It is also because Buddhism's approach to basic questions that confront mankind is in some ways like and in other ways fundamentally unlike the convictions on which Christians build their lives.

Even in a brief, comprehensive survey such as is attempted in the following pages, there are questions that demand an answer. They provide the rather obvious framework and outline for our account. Out of what background did Buddhism spring, and how did that background affect it? How did it come to be? What, at the outset, were its main beliefs and practices? Where and why did it spread? What have been its chief developments in belief and practice? Where and why did it lose ground? What is its present status? And, since this pamphlet is written primarily for Christians, what similarities has it to Christianity and how do the two differ? How has Christianity fared in the lands and among the peoples where Buddhism is potent?

A very large work of several volumes would be required to give adequate answers to all these questions. For those with an interest in them but without the leisure for a detailed study, the following pages may prove of help. A reading list, selected out of the extensive literature in English, is included at the end of the book for those who wish to pursue the subject further.

The Environment Out of Which Buddhism Sprang

In its origin and early development, Buddhism was an Indian faith. The Indian background placed an indelible stamp upon it. Some of its early basic assumptions, which it regarded as axiomatic, were Indian. The language of its first writings, Pali, was Indian, and in another Indian language, Sanskrit, an enormous literature was eventually produced.

What kind of country was the India in which Buddhism was born? It was an India whose civilization was already old. We cannot be sure of all its elements. We do know, however, that it was an India in which Aryan peoples, after centuries of migrations from Central Asia by way of the northwest passes, were masters of much of the country. They had brought with them religious beliefs and practices and their own culture and social organization, but these were modified profoundly by the conquest and by the culture of the people who had preceded them. That culture is usually called Dravidian.

Among the eventual basic convictions of the religion of the Indo-Aryans, as we must call those Aryans who settled in India, were the transmigration of souls (often technically known as metempsychosis), karma, and the existence of many gods. The transmigration of souls means the rebirth after death of a living being, as an animal or as a man or a woman, in a status either happier or much less happy than that of his previous existence. That status is determined by karma. Karma may be described as the sum of an individual's thoughts and actions in all his previous incarnations. In each incarnation, he modifies his karma for either good or bad. To modify his karma for good, he must have correct knowledge of himself and the world. Karma can be bettered by good moral deeds, ritual, and ascetic self-discipline. The ultimate aim is not only to improve one's karma, but to do more, namely, to escape from the endless series of changes, the appalling eternal succession of births and rebirths. This would be salvation.

The custodians and directors of the way of salvation were, from the first, the Brahmans. The Brahmans were at the top of the caste struc-

ture. They dominated religion. Not all Brahmins were priests. They were, rather, the highest grade of the aristocracy. They were the hereditary intellectuals who were the transmitters of knowledge. The most important part of that knowledge was the way to salvation.

Not long before the emergence of Buddhism, there was a vast ferment in this early Hinduism. Many men abandoned the world and led wandering lives, subsisting on alms. Some drew together in bands and communities. They tended to form sects or schools of thought and religious practice. They debated such questions as whether the soul exists after death and, if so, whether that existence is conscious or unconscious, and whether back of existence is a cause. One of these sects that has survived to our day is Jainism. It arose about the same time as Buddhism, but, unlike the latter, its spread was confined almost entirely to India.

The Origin of Buddhism: the Founder and His Experience

At the outset, Buddhism was one of these sects. Its originator and chief figure had the personal name of Siddhartha and what we would call the surname of Gautama (both spellings are the Sanskrit rather than the Pali form). He belonged to the Sakyā clan. That clan had its seat in the north of India, south of the present Nepal and about a hundred miles north of Benares. The Sakyas were of the Kshatriya or warrior caste, aristocrats who in the social scale were surpassed only by the Brahmins. Another name given to the founder is Sakyā-Muni. He is most commonly called the Buddha, or the Enlightened. That designation had been known before his time, and Buddhists declare that there had been many before him who deserved it.

Our first written accounts of the life and teachings of Buddha date from several generations after his death. In the interval, these had been handed down orally. It is generally assumed, however, that the memories of the successive generations of the disciples of the Buddha were so accurate that we have, in the main, dependable knowledge of his teachings and the main course of his life.

Gautama Buddha was probably of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. A favored date for his birth is approximately 560 B.C. He was thus a contemporary of Confucius, a generation or two younger than Jeremiah, and a younger contemporary of Ezekiel.

The main outlines of the life of Gautama Buddha seem to have been about as follows: He was a scion of an aristocratic family, wealthy according to the standards of the times and with a warrior

tradition. Throughout his life, he appears to have had, perhaps unconsciously or half-consciously, the dignity and sense of assurance that came from his heritage. Before embarking on his eventful religious pilgrimage, he married and had a son. We do not know with certainty what led him to abandon a life of physical security and comfort. Stories possibly fabricated by later admirers but that may have in them elements of truth say that he was reared apart from some of the grimmer aspects of life and then was shocked by unexpected encounters with sickness, old age, and death.

Whatever the concrete experiences that drove him, it seems clear that while he was still young he renounced the world and left his parents, his wife, and his child. Like so many in India in his day and since, he began a wandering life, seeking an answer to the riddle of existence and through it salvation. For several years, perhaps six or seven, he continued his quest. He tried the various ways recommended by religious teachers with whom he came into contact. For a time, he submitted himself to the instructions of two teachers of repute and was a member of the groups that followed their discipline. He accepted their ideas about belief, conduct, and meditation. But to him, the philosophical system of neither proved convincing, nor did he find through them what he strove to acquire, namely, salvation.

He then experimented with asceticism and meditation, both of them roads approved by earnestly religious men of his day. He submitted his body to extreme austerities—going almost entirely without food, for a time living on seeds and grass and then dung, wearing haircloth, lying on thorns, standing for great lengths of time, and letting dirt accumulate on him. He meditated, on occasion seeking to do so while suspending his breathing. He underwent one of those struggles of the soul through which many of the great religious leaders of the ages have passed as a prerequisite to the certainty that gave them authority. When the answer sought for with such singleness of purpose did not come, he broke his fast, and thereupon five monks, who had been attracted to him by his extreme mortification, left him.

Then, finally, came what Gautama had sought. As he sat in meditation and contemplation under a wide-spreading bodhi tree, illumination broke upon him. It did not arrive all at once, but by stages. With it dawned what he believed to be true knowledge. He felt that he was emancipated from the endless succession of rebirths and had acquired freedom from both pain and ease. Thenceforth he was poised, self-possessed, and gave the impression of being always inwardly at peace. He had become the Buddha, the Enlightened.

Having attained enlightenment, the Buddha began, as the Buddhists say, to "turn the wheel of the law," namely, to teach others the way that he had found. Our accounts suggest that at first he hesitated to do this, but soon changed his mind. Until his death at an advanced age (about 483 B.C., when he was past eighty) he was an itinerant missionary, instructing all who would listen. During most of the year, accompanied by his disciples, he walked from place to place, living on what was put into his alms bowl or on meals offered by friendly hearers. In the afternoons, he meditated. In the evenings, he taught those who came to him, partly by question, answer, and discussion. During the three months of the rainy season, he paused in his wanderings and retired with his disciples to a quiet spot. Dignified, and having pity for those who had not, as he had, solved the riddle of life, he moved among men. Communities of his followers arose. Most of them were men, but some were women. Even during his lifetime, there was schism among them. One of his relatives, so it is said, sought to supplant him as leader of the movement and carried several with him. The Buddha is reported to have met his end through dysentery, which came from eating meat a peasant innocently had fed him.

The Teachings of the Buddha

The main teachings of the Buddha lend themselves to brief summary. He appears not to have questioned the current belief in the transmigration of souls and in its attendant, karma. Nor does he seem to have doubted the existence of gods and of evil spirits. Rather, assuming these as facts, he taught the way of salvation that he had discovered through the long agony of his search. To him, salvation was the breaking of the chain of repeated births and rebirths. To reach this end, he taught, the disciple must recognize what the Buddha held to be four basic truths. He called them the four Aryan or noble truths. Salvation is to be achieved not by emotion but by correct knowledge and the discipline to take advantage of that knowledge. Each one must work out his own salvation. Others may help him, and there is value in a community of those who are seeking to follow the true path, but in the last analysis every man must be his own savior.

The four basic truths are: (1) Existence entails suffering. (2) The cause of suffering is thirst, or desire, namely, the thirst for pleasure, prosperity, and continued life, and the clinging to existence. It is this thirst and this clinging that beget rebirth. (3) The way to escape from suffering and existence is to rid oneself of this thirst. (4) To be emanci-

pated from thirst, or desire, one must follow the eightfold path. The Buddha elaborated these truths, but their major framework was simple and easily remembered.

The eightfold path by which the chain of causation and suffering is to be broken is somewhat more elaborate, but its main outlines can also be stated in fairly simple terms.

The first section of the eightfold path is right views and beliefs. By this is meant a knowledge of the four truths and such beliefs as are implicit in them. Among these beliefs is the rejection of the existence of the self, or soul. The Buddha held that what we usually call the self is only aggregates of states of mind and properties such as feeling and perception. These aggregates are not permanent. They are constantly shifting, coming together and falling apart. As we have said, he accepted the Indian belief in transmigration with its succession of births and rebirths determined by karma. But he held that the realization of the nonexistence of the self is an essential step in being delivered from them.

The second section is right aspirations or right resolves. By this is meant the renunciation of pleasures, abstaining from malice, and doing no harm.

The third section is right speech. In this is included abstention from slander and lies and from harsh words and foolish chatter.

The fourth section is right conduct. This means the follower must not kill, steal, or be guilty of immorality.

The fifth is right means of livelihood. In this is embraced the withdrawal from occupations that bring harm or danger to living things, such as those of the butcher, the slave dealer, the tax collector, the seller of poison, and the caravan trader. It also includes making one's living through a right occupation, namely, one that does no harm to any living thing, but rather, helps others.

The sixth is right effort, or right wrestling. This entails the self-discipline that seeks to prevent wrong states of mind from arising, their suppression if they have sprung up, and the cultivation of right states of mind. Among the wrong states of mind are sloth and torpor.

The seventh section is right-mindfulness. It includes self-mastery. He who would follow it must rid himself of covetousness and melancholy. He must be master of his body. He must have such knowledge and mastery of himself that he will do nothing heedlessly nor mechanically, but only purposefully. Here seems to be a recognition of the self that is denied in the first step. If so, there is an inconsistency in the Buddha's teaching. Had he been challenged, presumably he would

have said that he had not been rightly understood. He would probably have explained that what we call the self can be profoundly altered by mental and physical training and discipline. Human life, so Buddhists have been accustomed to teach, is like fire and like fire feeds on fuel and is impossible apart from fuel. But, so they would have us note, a fire can be trimmed and made free of smoke.

The final section of the eightfold path is right concentration or right rapture. It involves concentration and meditation, but it is more than either. It includes the feeling of inward peace, the application of one's mental powers to such subjects and objects as one may select, the full understanding of the four truths, and the clarity of insight that came to the Buddha at the time of his enlightenment under the bodhi tree.

What is the goal of this eightfold path, as outlined by the Buddha? It is nirvana. And just what did the Buddha believe nirvana to be? That is not entirely certain. Clearly it is the end of desire. But did he mean that the existence of the individual ceases? On that point the Buddha appears not to have been specific. Nirvana is the blowing out of flame, that flame of fire to which the Buddhists liken human life. It is as though one had extinguished a candle. The wearying round of births and rebirths is broken. But the Buddha seems not to have been specific as to whether that means the end of the individual.

Gautama declared that when he became the Buddha, the Enlightened, he had reached a state in which for him birth, age, sickness, defilement, pain, and death—the evils from which he had struggled to achieve emancipation—had ceased. This would appear to mean that nirvana can be entered before physical death. After he had become the Buddha, Gautama had long years of intellectual and physical vigor. To him, nirvana meant freedom, inward peace, and joy. Presumably after that state has been reached, the death of the body is a relatively minor incident. The Buddha refused to express himself on the issue of whether he who this side the gate of physical death has entered nirvana will be annihilated when the body of flesh has perished. Possibly on that point he had no conviction. His disciples may have regarded him as knowing the answer but refusing to disclose it. Almost certainly he thought it unimportant. What to him was primary was attaining to the state in which the thirst or hunger that is the bane of human existence has been extinguished and therefore the suffering that is its fruit has come to an end.

The Buddha taught that salvation is an achievement of the individual, aided by the teaching and counsel of those who have previously



The ordination of a Buddhist priest is a momentous occasion.

In the picture above, several novices have arrived at a temple and are being prepared for the ceremonies.

They are followed, as is shown in the picture at the right, by a group of young women who are bearing gifts.





At left, the novices are being helped to put on their new garments by experienced hands. At right, they have been accepted into the order and may now carry begging bowls.

attained it. It is not the gift of God or of the gods. Prayer to unseen beings can be of no help. The Buddha did not deny the existence of gods and spirits. However, he thought of them as being, like men, caught in the long chain of births and rebirths, and believed that in new incarnations they might take other forms and no longer be gods or spirits.

The way taught by the Buddha is one, so he believed, in which the proper psychological approach and self-discipline bring the salvation that he himself experienced. That way is difficult but not impossible. It avoids extremes of asceticism and philosophical speculation. It is a middle path between luxury and self-mortification. There is no need

for the leadership of the Brahmans, either as priests, intermediaries between men and gods and experts in religious ritual, or custodians of esoteric philosophy. In a sense, the Buddha was a layman, and the movement that he started was a layman's revolt against the Brahmans.

Yet the Buddha began a new, privileged order of society. It is not one built on heredity. Any one may enter it if he pays the price of following the eightfold path. It is a community of those who have given themselves to that way. It is made up of what are usually called Buddhist monks. There are also nuns. As the Buddha conceived it, the community does not have political aims. It is for the purpose of fellowship in the attainment of salvation. Any free man may join it if he has no special obligations to the state or his parents and if he is uncontaminated by certain specified diseases. Unlike Western Christian monks, its members take no vows of obedience. However, they were early organized into special communities with heads and various functionaries needed for the administration of the common life.

At the outset, entrance was obtained by two simple ceremonies, often, but loosely, called ordinations. In the first, the postulant recited the "three refuges": "I take refuge in the Buddha; I take refuge in the Law preached by the Buddha; I take refuge in the Order," and also recited the "ten precepts": abstinence from (1) destroying life; (2) stealing; (3) impurity; (4) lying; (5) intoxicants; (6) eating at forbidden times; (7) dancing, music, and theaters; (8) garlands; (9) high or large beds; and (10) gold or silver. In the second ceremony, the postulant, who had to be at least twenty years of age, was presented to the community by a monk, and unless some member objected, he was enrolled. He was then put under the tuition of an older monk, who gave him instruction and for whom he performed the functions of a servant. True to his espousal of the middle way and his distrust of extreme asceticism, the Buddha ordered that the rank and file of the monks must be decently clad in a simple garment, which was originally a dull orange but in later centuries might be one of a variety of colors. He also decreed that in begging alms they should carry a bowl for the proffered food and not take it in their bare hands. To those who wished it, he permitted and outlined a more austere regimen.

True to the Indian belief, the laity acquired merit by supporting the monks. Unless they became members of the community, they could not lead the perfect life, but they could receive instruction from monks and could so improve their karma that in a future rebirth they could have a happy existence. A layman might even enter nirvana on his deathbed.



chapter 2

Influences in the changing pattern

After the death of Gautama Buddha, the faith that he had taught continued to spread, as it had during his long lifetime. His disciples handed on his teachings to their disciples. As we mentioned earlier, these were not committed to writing for several generations. In the interval, in spite of the amazing verbal memories that we associate with many of the scholars of South and East Asia, additions and modifications crept in. The accounts of the life of the Buddha were embellished with stories of miracles and the marvelous and with gods and demons. Elaborations of the primitive teachings were made. As the communities of monks multiplied in various parts of the country, variations developed, often around outstanding teachers. All this was to be expected.

We know only vaguely the history of the initial two centuries of Buddhism. The faith spread through zealous missionaries. Various sects or schools arose, some of them to flourish and then decay. It is said that two or three councils convened in the attempt to bring about agreement and to hold the movement together. But there was no continuing central authority to which all owed obedience. Even during his lifetime, although he decided disputed points, the Buddha permitted much liberty of interpretation and practice.

A Great Impetus Is Given by Asoka

It was through Asoka, an Indian monarch, that a great impetus was given to Buddhism. His espousal, support, and regulation marked a decisive epoch in the history of the faith. Asoka inherited a realm that embraced the larger part of India. He extended it by conquest. He

came to the throne about 270 B.C. The horrors of a war by which he extended his domains, he said in an edict that has survived, led to his conversion to Buddhism. At first a lay believer, he later committed himself fully and adopted the life of a monk.

Still retaining his throne, he renounced ambitions for conquest and military fame, presumably entrusted to others most of the burdens of civil administration, and gave himself to projects "for the welfare of man and beast." He exhorted his people to be kind to all living creatures, erected buildings and monuments for the religion, built hospitals, supervised other charitable activities, and sent forth missions to extend the faith in other lands. He was responsible for inscriptions, several of which have come down to our day, some on pillars and some on rocks. These are chiefly sermons and for the most part set forth moral precepts. While tolerating other religions, he stressed the Buddhist teaching and way of life.

He traveled widely through his dominions to further his purpose. He declared that he had sent missionaries to portions of India, largely in the South, which were not within his borders, to Ceylon, and to the Hellenistic kingdoms ruled by the successors of Alexander the Great in Syria, Macedonia, Egypt, and to the west of Egypt. He is reported to have called a council of several hundred monks that sought to define and establish orthodox Buddhist teaching by agreeing on what writings should be regarded as authoritative. These writings, it seems, were in Pali. We do not know how long Asoka reigned, but it was probably between thirty and forty years.

It is clear that Asoka was to a large degree responsible for the subsequent prominence of Buddhism in India and for its spread into neighboring lands. We know nothing from the records of the countries themselves of the missionaries that Asoka claims to have sent to Egypt, North Africa, Syria, and Macedonia. That does not necessarily mean that he exaggerated his achievement, for his teachers may well have reached these lands, even though local notices of their presence have failed to survive. However, it is certain that it was his initiative that prepared the way for the dominance of Buddhism in Ceylon, Nepal, and the Northwest.

The Growth of Buddhist Literature

By the time of Asoka, as we have suggested, Buddhism had begun to give rise to literature. Eventually this was to grow to enormous proportions and was to be in many languages. The earliest extant

writings are in Pali. Later ones are in Sanskrit and the languages of the peoples to which Buddhism went, among them Chinese and Tibetan. Pali is a literary language that is closely akin to the vernacular spoken by Gautama. Eventually it ceased to be used in India, but as a vehicle for Buddhist literature it survived in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia.

The works regarded as authoritative or canonical are in the Tipitaka (Tripitaka in Sanskrit). Tipitaka means literally "three baskets." The three Pitaka or Baskets are Vinaya, Sutta, and Abhidhamma. The Vinaya includes chiefly the rules that were to be followed by the monks and their community. Incidentally it contains information on the life of Gautama Buddha. Sutta, equivalent to the Sanskrit Sutra, is mainly a collection of the sayings, discourses, and sermons attributed to the Buddha and his disciples, in part arranged according to subject. To what extent it gives the exact words of the Buddha is debated. Obviously much of later invention has entered, but in general it is regarded as reflecting the teachings of the Buddha and here and there may carry over his precise words. The title Abhidhamma is composed of Dhamma, which means the doctrine of the Buddha, and Abhi, which is said to mean excess or outstanding. The two words taken together indicate that the Abhidhamma outranks the other two Pitaka. It arranges discourses attributed to Gautama according to their subject matter and is, accordingly, more systematic than the others. It is also probably later and is certainly more technical in its language and therefore harder to understand.

The Main Streams: Mahayana and Hinayana

As time passed, the religion developed in two main directions, Mahayana, meaning the Greater Vehicle or Carriage, and Hinayana or the Lesser Vehicle. Mahayana is the name given to the Greater Vehicle by its adherents. Originally Hinayana was a somewhat contemptuous name foisted on it by the teachers of Mahayana.

In general, Mahayana is denominated the Greater Vehicle because it professes to have as its goal the ultimate salvation of all living beings. It makes much of Bodhisattvas. Bodhisattvas are believed to be those who, pursuing the way of salvation, have voluntarily delayed entering nirvana until they have contributed to the salvation of all who have life. Many of them are purely mythical beings. To some an actual existence in time has been attributed.

In contrast, Hinayana teaches that each must work out his own

salvation. Those who, like the early disciples of Gautama, have succeeded in doing so, are known as Arhats. Hinayana is probably nearer to the original Buddhism than is Mahayana. It stresses the monastic life as the way to nirvana. In contrast, in some of its forms Mahayana offers salvation to the laity as well as to the monks. Hinayana, accordingly, is sometimes declared to be selfish and Mahayana unselfish.

Mahayana seems first to have developed on the northwestern borders of India. It is often called Northern Buddhism, while Hinayana, flourishing in the South, is often denominated Southern Buddhism. However, the geographical division has by no means been sharp. In the seventh century of the Christian era, a Chinese pilgrim reported that the majority of the Indian monks were of the Hinayana. While in the main the Buddhism of today in Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand is chiefly Hinayana, and in China, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, and Japan, Mahayana predominates, the two have influenced each other, and in the northern lands, notably China, both forms entered and had permanent effects.

Mahayana Buddhism, as we have suggested, seems to have had its birth in the Northwest of India. The date of its inception is unknown, but it appears to have been either shortly before or shortly after the beginning of the Christian era. Within a few centuries, it had displaced a variety of the Hinayana in that region and in Central Asia and began a spread that carried it northward and eastward until it became the prevailing form in China, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, and Japan. Although it had many schools, it had certain basic characteristics. Prayer was used. This had been absent from the teachings of Gautama, for, as we have seen, he said that each must work out his own salvation. The gods, like men subject to birth and rebirth, presumably could not help. In Mahayana, however, the Bodhisattvas could assist those still caught in the toils of transmigration. At least some of the Bodhisattvas ruled in happiness in heavens to which mortals could be admitted on death. It was also believed that there had been many Buddhas, of whom Gautama was only one. It was held, too, that there is to be a Buddha in the future, Maitreya, who is to restore the Buddhist way after it has fallen into disuse. Associated with these tenets, which we have here stated in a simplified, almost an oversimplified form, were certain philosophies, some of them profound and abstruse.

In both Mahayana and Hinayana, art and architecture developed. Images and paintings were made of Gautama Buddha and of other Buddhas, and also of Arhats and Bodhisattvas. Gods were portrayed. Some of the images and paintings showed Greek influence. In the wake

of the conquests of Alexander, Greek rulers and others who had adopted much of Hellenistic culture carved out states in Central Asia and on the borders of India. In these states, Hellenism was influential. In some, Buddhism flourished, and the images and paintings to which it gave rise had Hellenistic forms. Buildings were also erected for monasteries, many of them with images. Elaborate rituals arose and often were performed in structures that might be called temples. Stupas were erected. A stupa was originally designed to house a relic and was a mound of masonry. Later it was developed into other forms. Often these are called pagodas and as such are found in several countries.



These gilt images of Buddha and two Bodhisattvas sit in striking splendor on an altar before a brilliantly colored religious painting. The temple is near Seoul, capital of South Korea.



chapter 3

the outreach in asia

As we have hinted, Buddhism was by no means confined to India. It spread southward into Ceylon, eastward into Burma, Siam (now Thailand), and Cambodia, southeastward into the East Indies (now Indonesia), northward into Central Asia, Nepal, Tibet, and Mongolia, and northeastward into China, Korea, and Japan. The spread continued for centuries. The last important territorial gains were among the Mongols, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, nearly two thousand years after the birth of Gautama. However, since the conversion of the Mongols, chiefly in the sixteenth century, no gains of any consequence have been made, and by that time, as we are to see, there had been extensive losses both of territory and in vigor, losses that have continued.

Why this extensive spread? Many factors contributed. Not all of them operated in any one country.

The espousal by monarchs was important. We have already spoken of the role of Asoka. Early in the Christian era, but at dates of which we are not entirely sure, a Tartar ruler of the Kushan tribe, Kanishka by name, who ruled an empire of vast extent, adopted Buddhism, and his support seems to have been of marked assistance. The Kushans were a branch of a people in Central Asia, that reservoir of invasions, who pressed eastward to the borders of China and southward into India. By the time of Kanishka, the Kushans had already built a substantial empire that included much of Central Asia, the modern Afghanistan, and a considerable portion of India. Kanishka's territories seem to have stretched from Bokhara in Central Asia through Afghanistan and Kashmir to Madura in South India.

Tradition credits him with calling a council that sought to allay the

internal dissensions in Buddhist ranks, to determine which of the Buddhist scriptures were authoritative, to rearrange them in orderly form, and to compose explanatory commentaries. Kanishka was also a great builder of Buddhist structures. In his realms, both Mahayana and a northern branch of Hinayana were found, but Mahayana was gaining. Kanishka appears to have given an impetus to Mahayana that helped to carry it on its triumphant way northward and eastward. In a number of other realms, the patronage of monarchs greatly assisted the spread and prosperity of Buddhism.

Another factor in the spread of Buddhism was its connection with a high civilization, that of India. It came to many peoples with the prestige of and as a vehicle for that culture. Its art, the appeal of its philosophy to the minds of some of the intellectuals, its impressive and ornate ritual, and, in Mahayana, its promises of bliss in the future life, all aided in winning converts. In some lands, as in the East Indies and Southeast Asia, Indian merchants, conquerors, and settlers either introduced it or gave it support.

Among peoples of primitive cultures and religions, as were the Japanese when it first arrived, Buddhism had the attraction that a higher religion has often exerted among adherents of crude polytheistic and animistic cults. That seems to have been one of the reasons for its adoption by the Tibetans and the Mongols.

To these factors must be added the zeal of Buddhist missionaries and the vitality in Buddhism that gave rise to that zeal. Buddhism professed to have the answer to the riddle of human existence with its mixture of suffering and of aspirations that will not be content with the boundaries of the physical senses and the apparent termination brought by death. Mahayana Buddhism achieved a much wider spread than did Hinayana. With its profound philosophy for the educated, its promise of a future life of bliss for the good and faithful, its warnings of the tortures of hell for the wicked, and its confidence in the ultimate salvation of all living beings, it appealed to both the learned and the unlearned. In practice, however, Hinayana also offered an education and a discipline that were available for all. While it held that each must work out his own salvation, it sought to open to all the way toward that goal.

Buddhism in Ceylon

Buddhism was early carried to Ceylon. We do not know precisely when it first arrived. Popular belief affirms that Gautama himself

preached it, and what is declared to be his footprint in stone is revered on Adam's Peak. Its great spread and triumph date from the time of Asoka. That monarch is said to have sent to the island a near relative. The chief ruler of the island is reported to have been won and to have furthered the conversion of his subjects. Whatever the details, before the time of Christ the overwhelming majority of the population were Buddhist. One of the teeth of Gautama is said to have been sent to the island and to have become its most prized relic. What is purported to be that tooth is still venerated at Kandy. A tree, popularly believed to be from a shoot of the one under which Gautama obtained enlightenment, sent to the island by Asoka, is also preserved with care. What eventually became an extensive body of literature seems to have been introduced in oral form and later translated into the vernacular of the island.

Tamils from South India had long been settled on the northern peninsula of Ceylon, separated as it was from the mainland of India by only a shallow and narrow strait. The faith of the majority of the Tamils was Hinduism. As they competed for the control of the island, the Ceylonese tended to hold to Buddhism as their national faith.

Recently the Buddhism of Ceylon has experienced a notable revival. However, this seems to be as much from nationalist sentiment as from religious conviction, for the majority of the population consider that faith an essential part of the culture of the island. In the rising tides of nationalism that in the twentieth century have characterized Ceylon and much of the rest of the world, Buddhism has become one of the symbols of patriotic loyalty. It is not confined to temples. Many homes have shrines with a small image of the Buddha and perhaps Buddhist pictures. Daily offerings and prayers are made before these shrines.

In general, the Buddhism of Ceylon, as we have earlier suggested, is classed with Hinayana. In its popular expressions, the religion of the masses has beliefs and practices that are of an animistic character, including the worship of spirits, which may in part go back to pre-Buddhist times. Some of the gods of Hinduism are honored. Yet to a large degree, the Buddhism of Ceylon seems to have held rather closely to the early forms that came to it before the time of Christ and to have kept many of the original teachings and methods of the faith.

Burmese Buddhism

It was to be expected that Burma would feel the impact of Buddhism. It lies across the Bay of Bengal from India, and Indians

have been making their way to it by sea since the dawn of history. An Indian religion as missionary in character as was Buddhism would almost inevitably be a part of the Indian contact and would win footholds in the country. The peoples of Burma are not all of one race, but the strongest elements are those whom we call the Burmese proper. The latter are also a mixture, but in general are thought of as Mongolian. The Shans, a substantial minority group, seem to be rather more closely related to the Chinese. It is the Burmese who became almost solidly Buddhist and as a consequence were welded together culturally. Buddhism has also penetrated to the Shans, but they are not so thoroughly committed to that faith as are the Burmese. There are several other peoples, largely in the hills that flank the fertile valleys, who held to primitive culture and animistic religions. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Christianity made gains among them, notably among the most numerous, the Karens.

As is true of Ceylon, we do not know precisely when Buddhism was first planted in Burma. Claims have been made for a visit of Gautama Buddha to the country and for the later presence of missionaries sent by Asoka. The first is highly improbable and the second unproved but, in light of what is known of Asoka's initiative elsewhere, conceivably true. In the fifth century after Christ, the rise of a strong state of Hinayana faith in the neighborhood of Madras appears to have been followed by the rapid propagation of that branch of Buddhism in Burma. During the T'ang Dynasty of China (A.D. 618-907), visitors from that realm described the Burmese as being devout Buddhists, inclined to vegetarianism and reluctant to take life, even refusing to wear silk because the manufacture of that fabric involved the killing of silkworms.

In the eleventh century, a monarch whose capital was in Pagan, about ninety miles southwest of Mandalay, extended his domains by war and was an ardent patron of Buddhism. He was an ambitious builder of temples and pagodas. He gave such an impetus that for about two centuries after him Pagan continued to be a center of Buddhist faith and learning renowned not only in Burma but also in other lands. The building of religious structures continued, and while the population of Pagan has dwindled until it is little more than a village, the extensive architectural remains of its past glory are very impressive.

There is neither need nor space within the scope of this book to go into the details of the subsequent course of Buddhism in Burma. From time to time, dissensions on matters of doctrine or ceremony have rent



Two views of the Shwe Dagon are shown. Worshipers prefer to visit the temple immediately after a rain or early in the morning, for on clear days the equatorial sun makes the tiles and cement so hot that they blister bare feet. The main spire is surrounded by many smaller temples and a large area where the faithful may kneel to pray.

the Buddhist community. However, they have not been between Mahayana and Hinayana, but between various forms of the latter. Hinayana has been and is supreme.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the exception of the disorders brought by the Japanese invasion, the expulsion of the Japanese, and the subsequent civil war, Buddhism has prospered. It seems to be even more vital religiously than in Ceylon. Its countless temples, pagodas, and monasteries are physically prominent. Usually temples and monasteries are in one structure, the latter being dormitories. Notable is the towering Shwe Dagon in Rangoon, with its shining exuberance of gold leaf. Both inside and outside, the temples and pagodas are highly colored and extensively decorated with small mirrors. Outside are often many little bells, tinkling in the breeze. Pipal trees are to be found in most monasteries, venerated because of their association with the bodhi tree under which enlightenment came to Gautama. Statues of Gautama Buddha and of some other Buddhas abound.

It is said that with some exceptions the monks are of good moral character. Dressed in their professional garb—varied from brown to light yellow—they daily go the rounds of the neighborhood with their alms bowls, even though the contents of their bowls may not be eaten by them but are given to the poor. Presumably most of the monks have entered the order from a mixture of motives. In some a desire to assure their own salvation has been prominent. In others the appeal has been the life of comparative ease and security. Numbers of the monks are poorly educated, but a minority are learned. Twice a day, as the custom demands, at dawn and bedtime, the monks of each community assemble to chant hymns in praise of the law. An individual monk may, if he wishes, spend time in study and meditation.

For the laity, the faith is important. Each male is supposed to have spent some months in a monastery, either in boyhood or later. The monasteries have the education of the laity as one of their functions. Individuals or family groups come to the temples for worship. In the homes, as in Ceylon, there are Buddhist shrines before which daily prayers and offerings may be made. There are periodic public readings by monks to the laity from Buddhist literature, and latterly translations from the Pali into the vernacular have been prepared. From time to time, a layman may assume the garb of the monk without actually entering a monastery.

In common belief and practice, something of primitive animism is to be found. Spirits, known as *nats*, are held to be potent. Some are

good and some are bad, and the former can be appealed to for help against the latter. Representations of them are to be found in the monasteries.

For the intelligent Burmese Buddhist, whether monk or layman, worship is reverence for the Buddhas and its effects are regarded as either purely subjective, namely, within the person who prays, or as in some way affecting for good the karma of the one for whom prayer is offered. Many, however, driven by inner urgency, offer petitions for themselves or others, if not to the Buddhas then to the *nats*. Merit can be acquired to improve one's karma. Presumably it is for this purpose that the laity have erected the thousands of pagodas that dot the landscape. To many, especially the women, the moral teachings are important—among them kindness, helpfulness to others, giving to the needy, and nonresistance.

Since World War II, something of a revival of Buddhism has been seen in Burma. The constitution of the government that came into being after that conflict accorded a privileged status to Buddhism as the religion of nine tenths of the population. This appears in part to have been associated with an intensification of Burmese nationalism, similar to what we have noted in Ceylon. Certainly after the tie with Britain was severed, Buddhism was encouraged by the government.

In 1950, a Pali university was inaugurated with more than a score of constituent colleges in various parts of the country. Severe academic requirements were set up for admission. The Buddha Sasana Council, organized in 1950 at the suggestion of government officials, sought the cooperation of Hinayana scholars throughout the world for the revision of some of the versions of the Tipitaka and for making translations into various languages. Periodicals were published. There was also an effort to further missions and a world organization of Buddhists. In 1954-56, a World Council was held, announced as succeeding the ancient councils of which we have spoken.

Buddhist Thailand

Thailand, formerly Siam, has been, with Ceylon and Burma, prominent in the Hinayana world. The early history of Buddhism in Thailand is even more obscure than in Ceylon and Burma. As in Ceylon, popular belief ascribes its introduction to Gautama and, to support the contention, points to an alleged footprint of the Buddha in stone. The valley of the Menam, which constitutes the core of Thailand, has had a succession of inhabitants. It was not until the twelfth and thir-



Each year, countless persons visit Phra Buddha-baht, Thailand, to worship at a shrine that marks what is said to be a footprint of Buddha.

teenth centuries that the Thai, later dominant, moved into the region. They were from the southwestern borders of China. Buddhism probably was brought in from Cambodia, the adjoining state on the east, where it was present in a Mahayana form and associated with Hinduism. It may also have come by way of the Malay Peninsula and the southern stretches of Burma, where it was prevailingly Hinayana. When the Thai effected their conquest, they may have brought Buddhism with them. If so, since it was from China, it was mainly Mahayana.

Whatever the manner and history of its planting in Thailand, of recent centuries the Buddhism of that country has been Hinayana. While differing in some of its features, it has been essentially like the Buddhism of Ceylon and Burma. Indeed, from time to time there have been conscious contributions from one to another. The religious structures, known as wats, are of a somewhat different architecture from those of Burma, and the images of the Buddha are distinct, although not strikingly so. There has been rather more of Hinduism through Brahmans than in Burma. As in Burma, there is belief in spirits, both good and bad, and attempts are made to control the latter.

The large majority of the monks are said to be free from gross corruption in character, but most are reported to be indolent and to have only a superficial knowledge of the faith. There is the daily begging of food by the monks and the use of the begging bowl. The monk has been enjoined always to wear a yellow robe, to eat what is given him, not saving any for another day, to give to the needy, to be courteous, and to meditate on the transiency of all things and on the punishments and rewards of hell and heaven. As in Burma, custom has required of the laity that each male youth spend some months in a monastery. Moreover, in the schools provided by the state and which all children are supposed to attend, instruction in the Buddhist faith, largely its moral precepts, has been required and is given by monks. The monks also hold services and preach sermons for the laity.

To the well-instructed Buddhist, prayer has been for the purpose of honoring the Buddha and his followers and by memorizing and repeating it to honor the Buddhist teaching. The less instructed have resorted to prayer in behalf of their own needs or of those of their friends and relatives. Some others, better instructed, would hold that prayer improves the karma of him who prays and of those for whom prayer is offered and that to this end the recitation of the sacred writings is to be made by the chanting of the monks.

As to nirvana, the majority of the laity have thought of the Buddha

as now in it in a state of conscious bliss, while some of the more learned of the monks have held it to be complete unconsciousness. Others of the monks have taken an intermediate position, describing it in negative terms and holding it to be unknowable to men in this present life. To the average layman and to many monks, the succession of rebirths so poignant in the setting of primitive Buddhism has had at best only a slight and purely theoretical significance. That has meant that the four noble truths held basic and axiomatic by Gautama have faded into the background or have disappeared. More prominent in popular belief has been the conviction that after death the good go to heaven and the bad to hell.

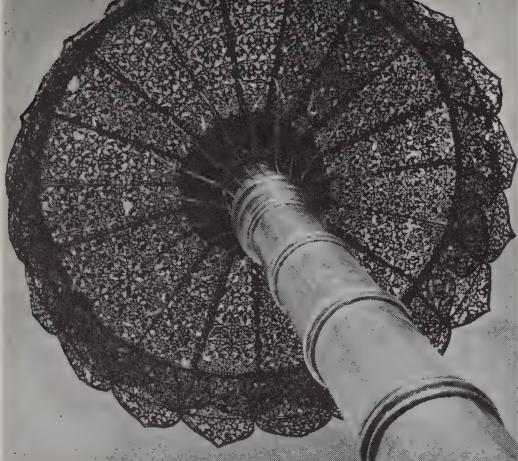
In most homes, there are Buddhist shrines. In numbers of homes, prayer opens and closes the day, and daily provision is made for the begging bowls of the monks. Many of the more earnest go weekly to a temple for a service consisting of chants by the monks, readings from the sacred books, prayers by lay worshipers, and perhaps a sermon.

In Thailand, Buddhism has been the religion of the state, and the government has exercised a general supervision of its institutions. However, each monastery tends to be self-governing and to elect its own functionaries. In the years after World War II, there was no such marked revival as in Burma.

In the Malay Peninsula south of Thailand, Hinduism and Buddhism were once present, but beginning at least as early as the thirteenth century were displaced by Islam.

Cambodia

Cambodia has had a somewhat checkered religious history. From early times, the majority of the population have been Khmers. Indian culture and with it Indian religion entered at some undetermined date, but at least as far back as the first centuries of the Christian era. Indian immigrants, largely merchants and Brahmins and perhaps Buddhist missionaries, brought with them their civilization and faiths. Ruling houses of Indian blood helped to bring Cambodia into the Indian cultural area. From about the eighth to the middle of the fourteenth century, Cambodia was the strongest power in what we now think of as Indochina. Its monarchs were great builders of temples and palaces, in modified Indian styles of architecture. Remains of these magnificent structures, at Angkor, are among the most impressive ruins in the world.



This gold umbrella ornaments the pavilion of Doi Sudhep, a Buddhist temple near the city of Chiengmai, Thailand.

For some centuries, the prevailing religions were Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism, or, as perhaps we should call it, Brahmanism. The two existed side by side and apparently without any thought of being incompatible with each other. A succession of great ministers of state appear to have encouraged Buddhism, and for a time in the twelfth century Buddhism took precedence over Hinduism as the religion of the court.

In the course of the centuries, Hinayana supplanted Mahayana Buddhism and to a large extent reduced Brahman influence. We do not know with any certainty why this took place. Presumably Hinayana Buddhism came from Siam. Its spread may have been associated with the growing power of that realm, for beginning at least as early as the fourteenth century, Siamese monarchs from time to time invaded Cambodia and succeeded temporarily in ruling part or all of it. It has also been suggested that Hinayana, as it existed in Siam, appealed much more to the rank and file of the population than did Brahmanism, which was aristocratic, and even more than Mahayana. Whatever the reason or the processes by which it achieved its triumph, Hinayana became the dominant faith of Cambodia and has maintained that position. Hinduism declined and eventually was confined chiefly to court ritual. Some traces of its gods are still found in Buddhist shrines, but these have been subordinated to the dominant Hinayana.

From this history, it is not surprising that the Buddhism of Cambodia is much like that of Thailand. As in Thailand, monks are said to be of good moral character, but many are reported to be indolent and ignorant. Boys spend time, usually part of their teen years, in the monasteries wearing monastic garb and receiving instruction in the faith. To the more learned monks, nirvana is the end of individuality and of change, but it is neither existence nor nonexistence. To some

others, it is unending calm joy in a celestial body. To still others, it is complete annihilation. The rank and file of the laity seem either never to have heard of nirvana or to think of it as a place of delight.

To the informed, prayer is not petition, for the Buddha cannot help them, since he is no longer an active person and so cannot respond. To the masses, however, and to some of the monks, requests in prayer to the Buddha are made with sincerity and with expectations of response. As in Burma and Thailand, belief in spirits has persisted, presumably from pre-Buddhist times, shrines are erected to them, and prayers are made to them in case of sickness or other distress. For the monks, there have been government and discipline by a structure through abbots to a head ecclesiastic for the entire country. In the homes of the laity, there are Buddhist shrines for daily worship, and four times a month services of worship with readings from the scriptures and preaching are conducted by the monks for the laity. These seem to be attended more by women than by men. In the monasteries, there are daily morning and evening services for the monks.

The Thin Layer of Buddhism in Annam

To the east of Cambodia is the realm that we know as Annam. By conquest in the fifteenth century, the ancient kingdom of Champa became part of the Annamite empire. Champa, the country of the Chams, was on the south coast of Indochina, south of Tonkin. Civilization seems first to have come to it from India early in the Christian era. It was not conquered by China, as were Tonkin and Annam. Therefore it was not as much influenced by Chinese culture as were the latter. Through Indian influence, Hinduism became prominent as a religion of the land. Mahayana Buddhism was also represented. How it came is debatable, but it may have filtered south from China or have come directly from India. It seems never to have been as strong as Hinayana has been in Cambodia, nor does Hinayana appear ever to have penetrated to Champa and the Annamite empire.

Appearance and Disappearance in the East Indies

The East Indies, most of which are now embraced in Indonesia, were long within the Indian cultural orbit. Beginning presumably early in the Christian era, Indian merchants and colonists arrived, bringing something of their civilization with them. That civilization became dominant. Its main centers were in Java, but parts of Sumatra and

Borneo passed under its influence and several smaller islands, including Bali, to the east of Java, were affected. With Indian contacts, there came both Hinduism and Buddhism. Apparently Hinduism was stronger at the outset, and as time passed Buddhism partly displaced it. Yet both survived until they were supplanted by Islam. The one exception is the island of Bali, where Hinduism has persisted, probably with little if any admixture of Buddhism. Buddhism appears to have been represented in the East Indies by both Hinayana and Mahayana, with the latter predominating. It left behind it imposing architectural remains, among which the most famous is that of Borobudur, a temple in the form of a great stupa crowning a pyramidal seven-story platform.

Mahayana Spreads North and East

The most extensive geographic expansion of Buddhism was through Mahayana. Since it had its initial development in the northern reaches and on the northwestern borders of India, it was natural that its major spread was northward and then, by the caravan routes across Central Asia, eastward.

Immediately to the north is the mountain-enclosed state of Nepal. Buddhism is said to have owed to Asoka its introduction to that country. It became mixed with Hinduism, and in the twentieth century the religion of the country is a form of Mahayana Buddhism with strong Hindu elements.

We have noted the strength that Buddhism gained in the Kushan Empire under Kanishka early in the Christian era, when that realm extended from India into Central Asia. We have also seen that both Hinayana and Mahayana were represented in it. From cities northwest of India, caravan roads led over the mountainous backbone of Asia into Sinkiang. They continued across that region to the northwest of China proper and were the land routes that connected China with Persia, India, Western Asia, and Europe. The routes were made difficult by mountains and deserts but were rendered feasible by oases, some of them in the basin of the Tarim River.

In this corridor of Sinkiang, strains from many cultures were represented, the natural concomitant of caravans connecting lands of several civilizations. Among these cultural strains were religions. Buddhism flourished in the caravan cities and oases. In some places, it was represented by Hinayana and in others by Mahayana. It was present shortly before the beginning of the Christian era. In various stages, it persisted for several centuries.



chapter 4

Buddhism in the east

It was partly from India and its Central Asian centers and by the caravan routes across Sinkiang that Buddhism achieved its conquests in China, Korea, and Japan. Here for many hundred years were some of its chief strongholds, and here it developed features peculiar to these lands.

Buddhism in China

We do not know precisely when Buddhism first entered China. It may have been introduced as early as the second century before Christ. During the Han Dynasty that, with an interruption about the time of Christ, ruled China from 206 B.C. to A.D. 220, Chinese power was extended into the Tarim River basin and beyond it, and imperial authority was so stabilized on the South Coast, with its seaports, that this region was permanently incorporated into the realm. It was to be expected that Buddhism would enter from both directions. Already present in Central Asia, it would come by the caravan routes, and sooner or later it would also make its way in association with the sea-borne trade.

During the Han Dynasty, Buddhism, though present, was not so popular as it later became. Confucianism had the support of the state and of the dominant families. Taoism, also of Chinese origin, flourished. The foreign faith found progress difficult. Moreover, by its emphasis on celibacy, it ran counter to the emphasis in Confucian ethics on filial piety and the obligation to beget a male heir to carry on the family line. However, it became firmly rooted.

The great growth of Buddhism in China was in the four or five cen-

turies after the downfall of the Han Dynasty. For most of that time, China was divided politically. Not until A.D. 589 was unity reacheived, and then it was by a ruling house that was able to maintain itself on the throne for only about three decades. In A.D. 618, however, the T'ang Dynasty came to power and ruled the empire for nearly three centuries, until A.D. 907. Under this dynasty, China enjoyed one of the most prosperous and creative periods in its history, and Buddhism in that country reached its apex.

All the reasons for the rapid growth of Buddhism after the downfall of the Han Dynasty are not entirely clear. Some are fairly obvious. One was the numerous missionaries who introduced and propagated it. Another was the succession of pilgrims who journeyed to the Buddhist centers in India and who, returning, brought with them copies of books and in other ways reinforced the faith. Still another reason was the fact that during the early years of the era Buddhism was in its heyday in India. It was only later in this period that the decay became apparent which, as we are to see, led to its near disappearance in the land of its birth. Another facilitating factor was the political division of the realm and the consequent lack of support by one central government of a rival religion or system. So long as the Han had ruled all China and endorsed Confucianism, Buddhism had found the way difficult. When the T'ang Dynasty renewed the unity of the realm and undergirded that unity by its patronage of Confucianism, Buddhism in China began the slow decline that has continued into our own day. In the long interim, no single family brought all China under its control. Moreover, in the centuries of political disunity, the rulers of some of the states among which the country was divided were ardent patrons of Buddhism.

To these easily recognized reasons for the spread of the faith others may be added that are in part conjectural. It is quite possible that the philosophy associated with Buddhism appealed to many of scholarly minds. It has more than once been said that the translation into Chinese of much of the voluminous Buddhist literature was an important factor. The art and architecture accompanying Buddhism may have helped. Presumably stately ritual had an appeal. Then, too, Mahayana Buddhism presented conceptions of life after death in much more concrete forms than did beliefs then current in China. It offered vivid pictures, both in words and in paintings, of heavens of bliss and hells of torment. It therefore filled a void and gave answers to questions that men of all races and cultures seem always to have asked.

Whatever the combination of causes may have been, Buddhism

became popular. Its monasteries and monks multiplied. It stimulated the creation of structures, paintings, and sculptures, some of them among the most impressive in the history of art. It had effects, several of them profound, on the other religions of China, notably Taoism but also, to a lesser extent and much later, Confucianism. It made continuing contributions to standards of right and wrong, added to China's gods, and enlarged beliefs about the future life. Charitable and public works were initiated and maintained in the hope of acquiring merit. For most Chinese, nirvana had little significance. It was the heavens and hells prominent in Mahayana that loomed large in Buddhism as held by the multitude.

In the days of its greatest vitality in China, a number of schools, sometimes with only a rough approximation to accuracy called sects, flourished. Some were imported. Others were either of Chinese origin or were greatly modified in their Chinese environment. We need not here describe or even enumerate all of them. However, we must call attention to four that were to achieve and retain prominence.

One was Ch'an, often and perhaps better known in the Occident by its Japanese designation, Zen. It held that enlightenment or salvation comes, as it came to Gautama, suddenly. Meditation, good works, study, and asceticism may prepare the way for it, but at best they are only aids and are secondary. An Indian origin was ascribed to it, but the school seems to have been developed chiefly by Chinese and to have been in part a reaction against the abstruse philosophy and complicated discipline that much of the imported Buddhism held prerequisite to salvation.

Another school, clearly of Chinese origin, T'ien T'ai, took its name from a mountain in the province of Chekiang, in East China, where one of the founders lived. It was a reaction against Ch'an and taught that salvation comes, not through sudden enlightenment alone, but through a combination of ritual, study of books, meditation, moral discipline, and insight. It emphasized one of the Buddhist works, the *Lotus Sutra*, and tended toward a theistic view of the Buddha nature.

Ch'ing T'u (Pure Land), or the Lotus School, eventually became the most popular of the Chinese Buddhist sects. It went back to non-Chinese roots but was given a great impetus by a Chinese of the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ. It held that all that is necessary to salvation is faith in Amitabha, also known as Amida, and, in modern Chinese, as O-mi-t'o-fu. Amitabha is one of the many Buddhas found in Mahayanist teaching. He is said to have been a monarch of long ago, who vowed to become a Buddha to make possible the salvation



A Japanese concept of the Buddha is seen in this imposing statue at Nagoya. It is so large that a man could sit comfortably on one of the hands.

of all living things and to establish a realm to which all might gain admission and enjoy sinlessness, wisdom, and supreme happiness.

Admission to the Pure Land or Western Paradise over which he is believed to preside is to be had by repeating in faith the name of Amitabha. That repetition need be only for a week or for a day. It is taught that having so repeated the name of Amitabha, the believer on death will be attended by a multitude of divine beings who will protect him from evil spirits and carry him to the Western Paradise, where he will be reborn in a spiritual body in one of the lotuses on the sacred lake. Obviously, this school has had a great appeal to the laity. To make sure of his salvation, the layman may say the name hundreds and thousands of times, recording the repetitions on papers designed for that purpose. The phrase used is Nan-mo O-mi-t'o-fu (Adoration to Amitabha Buddha). One of the Bodhisattvas attending Amitabha is Kuan-yin, sometimes called the Goddess of Mercy. She has been very popular.

Coming to prominence in the T'ang Dynasty was Chen-yen, meaning True Word. A development from a later Indian Buddhism, it was pantheistic, held that the One Spirit manifests itself in many, and had a True Word revealed to the initiated only after a grueling prepara-



This Buddha, one of many found in the Chang Memorial, Sian, China, illustrates how national influences shape even religious art forms.

tion. In practice, it stressed ceremonies and magic words as a short cut to salvation.

Buddhism never displaced the religions native to China. It is often said that the Chinese have three religions—Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. That is part of the truth. For centuries, these three systems were outstanding. But there was also belief in many gods that were either unrelated or only loosely related to one or another of the three. Some of them went back to remote antiquity. Others were of more recent origin. There was also widespread belief in evil spirits. The religion of the large majority of the Chinese was a combination of many elements, for the most part held without any sense of inconsistency. While the Confucian scholar might loftily and scornfully denounce the various religions as superstitions, in his heart he might wonder whether they had a segment of truth. Taoist monks might hold only to their cult, and Buddhist monks might give themselves exclusively to their religion. Minorities among the Chinese were Muslims, and in later years rapidly growing minorities have been Christians. Neither Muslims nor Christians would conform to the easygoing concurrent practice of the other systems. Yet for the majority, Buddhism was held along with other faiths. In many, perhaps

most homes, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and the cults of some of the many indigenous gods were given a place, and Buddhist ethical conceptions, beliefs about life after death derived from Buddhism, and worship of some of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were a part of the family life.

For centuries, Buddhist monasteries have been prominent in China. Usually they have been maintained by endowments in lands, by offerings, and by fees for the performance of ceremonies, generally those in behalf of the dead. The use of the alms bowl for begging has been exceptional. Many of the monasteries are on mountain peaks, in mountain dells, and in secluded valleys, but others are in cities. Monks have been marked by their dress and by their shaven heads that show the lines of scars left by the burning of little cones of incense, part of the rite of induction into full membership in the community. The ranks of the monks have been recruited in several ways. Some monks were vowed as boys by their parents, some have come from a deep sense of religious need, some were bought as children by the monasteries from parents unable to support them, others have entered from a desire for security, and still others to escape punishment for crime. There have also been communities of women, but they have been much less numerous than those of men. Daily monastic services have been two or three in number and have consisted of invocations, praises, and the recitation of passages from the sacred books, generally with the accompaniment of musical instruments.

Korea

Buddhism spread to Korea from China. For hundreds of years, all or part of Korea was either under direct Chinese rule or was tributary to China. Precisely when Buddhism entered the land we do not know, but it was strong in the sixth century, when it was flourishing in China. It seems to have had its heyday in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, and monks then became very influential at court and in the government. They multiplied, and there was much construction of monasteries.

Planting and Growth in Japan

It was from both Korea and China that Buddhism made its way to Japan. When it first arrived, the Japanese were in a primitive or nearly primitive state of culture. Buddhism, therefore, came with the

prestige of high civilizations, primarily Chinese and Indian. It was a vehicle for much of the religious, philosophical, and artistic phases of these civilizations. It made its first major impact at a time when it was at the height of its vitality and popularity in China. Possibly because of this fact, and possibly because it came to an able people during the primitive stage of their civilization, Buddhism achieved and held a larger place in Japanese than in Chinese life. It was first strong in the court and from there spread to the aristocracy and to the masses of the population. Both Hinayana and Mahayana were introduced, but the latter has had the larger following.

However, primitive though Japanese culture and its associated religion were when Buddhism first encountered them, that faith did not as completely displace what had gone before it as it did among some other peoples who were in a similar cultural stage when it arrived. In contrast with the Singhalese of Ceylon, the Burmese, and the peoples of Thailand and Cambodia, the Japanese maintained their pre-Buddhist religion as an independent cult. To be sure, this was given a Chinese name, Shinto, and there were centuries when Buddhism appeared about to absorb it by identifying the Shinto gods with some of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Yet Shinto never completely lost its identity. Eventually it revived, became unmistakably distinct, and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been extremely vigorous.

With Buddhism were imported some of the schools or sects that characterized it in China. In the mid-twentieth century, twelve sects or schools, imported and indigenous, are recognized as important. Some of the earliest to arrive were Hinayana, but the later and the majority were of the Mahayana. Ch'an, in Japanese Zen, became even more prominent than in China, was popular with the lower aristocracy of the military class, the samurai, and developed in a distinctly Japanese fashion. T'ien T'ai, in Japanese Tendai, was introduced and, like Zen, so appealed to the Japanese that many of them made it their own and placed on it a stamp peculiar to their country.

Pure Land (Ch'ing T'u), with its faith in Amitabha, was late in winning wide popularity. However, in time it became extremely popular and developed several variations. In Japanese, it is known as Jodo. One of the schools that issued from it is Jodo Shinshu, or True School of Jodo. It is usually called simply the Shin school. It teaches that since the sincere invocation of Amitabha is all that is necessary to insure entrance into the Western Paradise, asceticism, elaborate ceremonies, and a knowledge of profound philosophy are

not required. Accordingly its devotees marry, dress in lay garb, and are teachers rather than monks. To be sure, both Jodo and Jodo Shinshu have been given an undergirding of philosophy, but it is declared that the ordinary Buddhist does not have to become familiar with it to attain salvation. In contrast with Indian thought, Jodo and Jodo Shinshu do not regard this present life as evil, but hold that it is possible here and now to begin the kind of life that is to be continued in heaven. Chen-yen (Japanese Shingon) also came, introduced from China by one who had studied there. It gained wide popularity.

One of the most prominent forms of Japanese Buddhism has been that which bears the name of its founder, Nichiren. Nichiren was born in 1222 and died in 1282. He was therefore a contemporary of the initial development and rapid growth in popularity of the Jodo, Shin, and Zen schools. That period was a time when Buddhism penetrated effectively to the rank and file of the population. It was also characterized by political division, natural calamities, and threatened invasion from abroad. The threat of invasion was by the Mongols, whose empire, including China, Korea, and much of the heartland of Eurasia, was at that time the most extensive that had ever been established. The threat became concrete in two expeditions that were repulsed, partly by Japanese bravery but chiefly by opportune storms that wrecked the fleets bearing the invaders.

Nichiren passionately longed for a united Japan. As part of that unity, he strove to bring together all Japanese Buddhism. He declared that the various sects had departed from the original Buddhism of Gautama, and he strove for a reform that would sweep aside all divisions by returning to the original teachings of the faith. He believed that he found those teachings in what is usually known as the *Lotus Sutra*. He was mistaken in his conviction that the *Lotus Sutra* contained the primitive Buddhism. As a matter of fact, it was a late production, an expression of a form of Buddhism that would scarcely have been recognized by Gautama, or if recognized would have been repudiated. Yet Nichiren proclaimed what he believed he found there and did it with unwavering conviction and unremitting pertinacity. He attacked the other sects and did so with such vehemence that he aroused violent opposition. His vituperation resulted in his being twice banished, and he once narrowly escaped execution.

Among other teachings, he declared that Buddhism had gone through two stages, that of the Hinayana and that of the Mahayana, and was in a third stage. The third stage was one in which Mahayana was to be swept aside and true Buddhism restored. Nichiren laid great



Japanese monks, above, place fresh plants before a religious painting. At left, the seventy-four-year-old high priest of a temple near Tokyo, who is spiritual head of the Zen Buddhist community, is seated before the portrait of a Zen saint. In the picture below, prayers are being offered in a Japanese temple.



stress on faith, faith in the *Lotus Sutra*. An itinerant missionary who covered much of Japan, he won many followers. After his death, they continued to multiply. This was partly because his disciples carried on the tradition of missionary preaching with attacks on the other sects and the promulgation of their distinctive beliefs.

In architecture and art, Buddhism made major contributions to Japanese culture. Its monasteries and shrines were prominent in the several capitals of the empire. At the earliest of the continuing centers of government, Nara, they are preserved as the chief physical survivors of that city. In Kyoto, for more than a thousand years the seat of the Emperor, Buddhist temples continue to be a striking feature of the city and have also long been prominent on neighboring mountains. Famous temples are to be found in other places, some in cities and some in hill and mountain glens. Across the centuries, Buddhist themes have inspired painters.

Buddhism has made an indelible impression upon the morals and the conceptions of the future life held by the Japanese. Japanese ethical standards have been shaped more by Confucianism than by Buddhism, but the latter has not been without influence upon them. Neither Confucianism nor Shinto say much about life beyond the grave, and what they say is vague. In most of the forms in which it was brought to Japan, Buddhism painted for the masses concrete and vivid pictures of what follows physical death. These have persisted. For example, before the execution as war criminals of the Japanese leaders convicted after World War II, they were given spiritual care by a Buddhist chaplain. Several of them rested in the confident hope that the gallows was the prelude to paradise.

Through emigration from Japan, Buddhism made its most recent extensive spread to new territory. This was in Hawaii in the latter part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century. Japanese form the largest single ethnic element in the population. Many of them hold to Buddhism, and temples have been erected and maintained to serve them. However, the Japanese in Hawaii number only a few score thousand.

Lamaistic Tibet and Mongolia

The latest major spread of Buddhism was into Tibet and Mongolia. The faith arrived first in the former country, perhaps a century or so after it first made its appearance in Japan. A traditional date is the second half of the seventh century after Christ. However, Lamaism,



Tibetans believe that the prayers printed on flags like those shown above this shrine are wafted to heaven by the wind.

which became the dominant form of the faith in Tibet and Mongolia, apparently did not come until about the middle of the eighth century. Tibet's pre-Buddhist religion seems to have been a form of animism, with means of control of evil spirits. After a time of alternating growth and persecution, for about a hundred years the Buddhist tide ebbed. Then, reinforced by missionaries, it again moved forward. Some of

the missionaries were Tibetans who had studied in Nepal. More were natives of Nepal, Bengal, and Kashmir. They brought forms of Buddhism that made much of magic. Many of the monks were married. Monasteries multiplied. They were solidly built to withstand the rigors of the winters on the high Tibetan plateau and for protection against the wars between the different chieftains and their supporters.

In the latter part of the fourteenth and in the early part of the fifteenth century, a Tibetan, Tsong-kha-pa, worked a transformation in the Buddhism of his native land. He was a reformer who tightened the discipline of the monks, insisting upon celibacy and making more of the monastic services, reduced the magical elements, and sought to perpetuate his changes by effective organization. He founded and became the head of a monastery near Lhasa. From the color of the hats and girdles of its monks, the order that he founded became known as the Yellow Sect. Those who continued the old ways were known as the Red Sect, for that was the color associated with them. The Yellow Sect won control of most of the country. The belief was inculcated that the heads of its chief monasteries were reincarnations of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. When one died, a search was made for a successor in the form of a fresh incarnation. That incarnation was held to be an infant born at the time of the death of his predecessor, who by tests, such as recognizing some of the latter's possessions, was proved to be authentic. Obviously, during the infant's minority the actual administration was in the hands of ministers.

The chief monk in the country has been known as the Dalai Lama. His capital is at Lhasa and his palace, a massive structure of several stories, crowns the hill that commands the city. The Dalai Lama has exercised civil as well as religious authority over much of the country.

It is not only the Dalai Lama who has been prominent. To a lesser but important degree, other heads of monasteries have wielded power over areas about them. Buddhist monasteries have been outstanding features of the life of the country. Some of them have thousands of monks. Some, too, are centers of Buddhist scholarship and for full membership have required exacting and prolonged study.

The Buddhism of Tibet has spread outside the borders of the country. For example, the Lama Temple in Peking has been famous. However, the main extension has been in Mongolia. The major conversion of the Mongols seems to have been in the sixteenth century. The earlier prevailing faith of the Mongols had been shamanism, a form of animism in which shamans, or priests, were used to control the spirits. The Buddhism adopted was entirely from Tibet, and the

literature was largely in Tibetan. Here, as in Tibet, monasteries have been prominent. But they have not been as dominant as in that country. Since the Mongols have been a pastoral folk, subsisting on their herds, the Buddhist attitude toward the taking of life has not been effective. Moreover, although monasteries have been the chief centers of settled life, many of the monks have shared the seminomadic life of the nation. Buddhism did not fully displace shamanism. The latter persisted.

The Spread of Buddhism: Concluding Generalizations

This concludes our survey of the spread of Buddhism. We have attempted to give something of the characteristics of the faith in the various lands it entered.

It will be noted, first, that among people of high civilization or advanced religion Buddhism did not fully displace its predecessors. In India, in spite of its popularity extending over many centuries, it did not dislodge Hinduism, the Brahmans, or its fellow Hindu "heresy," Jainism. In China, it was widely accepted, but merely as one of three leading systems.

In the second place, it was only among peoples who were in a primitive or nearly primitive stage of culture and where the prevailing religion was animism that Buddhism became dominant. This we have seen in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand (Siam), Tibet, and Mongolia. Even in these lands, much of the earlier primitive belief in spirits has persisted. Moreover, in Cambodia and the East Indies, Buddhism competed with Hinduism and did not completely eliminate it. In Japan, where it came as a vehicle of high civilization to a people who were in a primitive stage of culture, it did not erase the native cult, Shinto, and it shared with Confucianism the honor of schooling the Japanese people in the culture of the continent.

Thirdly, the geographic spread of Buddhism continued for about two millenniums. Beginning in the lifetime of Gautama, the last substantial gains were among the Mongols, about two thousand years later. Not for the last four or five centuries has Buddhism made any significant advance. Nor, indeed, in that time have there been basic new developments in its life and thought. It has numbered some great scholars and here and there has experienced revivals. However, not since Nichiren, who died in the fourteenth century, and Tsong-kha-pa, who died early in the fifteenth century, has Buddhism seen a creative figure who has moved a large segment of any people.



chapter 5

Buddhism and Rival faiths

For an even longer period than the half a millennium in which it has made no large territorial gains, Buddhism has been declining in vigor and surrendering ground. Although for much of that time its losses were partly offset by fresh territorial gains, eventually the former became much greater than the latter.

The Long Decline

The first major losses of Buddhism were in the land of its birth, India itself. Here Hinduism, led by the Brahmans, won out over it. This was in part by active opposition. We hear of persecutions by zealous Hindu monarchs, but these were temporary and did not cover all India. Invasions of the Huns in the fifth and sixth centuries wrought devastation, especially in the Northwest, where Buddhist monasteries had been numerous. The coming of Islam, borne by conquerors from Central Asia, first marked in the ninth and tenth centuries and intermittent from then onward into the sixteenth century, dealt severe blows to such of Buddhism as survived in the North and Northwest. However, the decline of Buddhism in India was as much by absorption as by violence. One of the characteristics of Hinduism has been its inclusiveness, the kind of tolerance that holds that there are many ways to ultimate truth, no one of them perfect. Hinduism has been willing to accept any set of beliefs whose adherents will agree to that position. It is intolerant only of religions, such as Islam and Christianity, that claim to be sufficient and final revelations of truth. Its victory over Buddhism was achieved slowly, partly through the accommodation of Buddhism to Hinduism and then through the disappearance of a

Buddhism that had come to be less and less different from Hinduism.

In the seventh century of the Christian era, Chinese pilgrims reported the decay of Buddhism in India. This seems to have been especially marked in the South, where the competition of Jainism and Hinduism was particularly strong. A Chinese pilgrim described a Buddhist sect in the North whose beliefs closely resembled Hinduism. In the eighth and ninth centuries, a rising tide of Hinduism, furthered by great teachers and aided by some of the princes, reduced the extent of Buddhism.

It has been suggested that Buddhism, being more concentrated in monasteries than was Hinduism, fell an easier victim to the Muslim invaders. It seems certain that the members of some of these communities were slaughtered. It has also been offered as a hypothesis that the Buddhist distinction between the laity and the monks proved a weakness. The former were presumably much less well instructed than the latter and found it easier to combine reverence for Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with that for Hindu deities without a sense of inconsistency. The decay of the monastic communities, partly through Muslim ravages, would thus further the passing of Buddhism and its absorption into Hinduism.

It is said that by the nineteenth century Buddhism had disappeared. In the twentieth century, traces of it were still seen in Bengal and neighboring Orissa, but as a distinct religion it was confined to border regions, especially Nepal, and to relatively recent immigrants.

Yet in being absorbed by Hinduism, Buddhism made continuing contributions to the conquering faith. The Buddha is esteemed as an incarnation of Hindu gods—either Vishnu or Siva—and surviving images and symbols of Buddhism are ascribed to one or the other of them. It is said that Buddhism is largely responsible for the sanctity of animal life in contemporary India, the absence of animal sacrifices except in a few Hindu sects, and the monastic institutions and discipline found in parts of South India.

In Central Asia, including Sinkiang, and in the East Indies, Buddhism was supplanted by Islam.

Among the Chinese, Buddhism did not disappear but had a slow decline. That decline began in the latter part of the T'ang period, the dynasty under which it had reached its apex.

This decline seems to have been due to a number of factors. One was the fact that in India the faith had passed its peak and that Chinese pilgrims were no longer so inspired by the monasteries and sacred sites in that land as their predecessors had been. In A.D. 845,

near the end of the T'ang, an imperial edict ordered all the Buddhist monks to return to lay life. The monarch who was responsible for the edict is said to have been an ardent Taoist. This policy, however, was reversed by the next ruler. Presumably more important was the revival and continued espousal of Confucianism by the state. From the time of the T'ang Dynasty until the disappearance of the monarchy in 1912, Confucianism enjoyed this support. The highly competitive examinations through which the civil bureaucracy was recruited were more and more based upon the Confucian classics. The examinations were the road to what ambitious men most desired—prestige and power, often combined with wealth. Most of the formal education was designed to prepare for them. Those who came up through that system, whether or not they had succeeded in the examinations, constituted the scholar class that dominated the social structure. In theory and often in practice, the members of that class looked on Buddhism with disdain. An imperial edict of the fore part of the eighteenth century that, translated into the vernacular, was for many decades widely read by officials and taught to the populace, decried Buddhism as well as other non-Confucian systems.

Although declining from its former vigor, Buddhism by no means disappeared from China. In spite of civil disturbances and the cultural revolution that swept across the country in the twentieth century, a phase of which in the 1920's was antireligious, Buddhism remained prominent until Communism took over the country. Its monasteries and monks were numerous. Lay pilgrims frequented its shrines. Its monks had a part in the ritual of death and burial.

As we have seen it, it was regarded as one of the three main religions and in most homes was given a place in the domestic shrines and ceremonies. It was prominent in some of the syncretic cults that arose from time to time in an effort to combine the best from various religious traditions. Prayer to one or another of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, notably to Kuan-yin, was believed to be efficacious in such blessings as delivery from illness and the obtaining of sons. Buddhist ceremonies were held to deliver the souls of the departed from torment. Passports to heaven were purchased from monks. Merit in the future life was to be acquired by vegetarianism, with its abstinence from the taking of life, and by such charitable acts as building bridges, mending roads, repairing or building monasteries, supporting orphanages and nurseries, giving alms, and donating medicines and coffins to the poor.

In Korea, Buddhism waned even more. This process seems to have begun late in the fourteenth century. It was in part due to the strength-

ening of Confucianism. It appears also to have been to some degree a reaction against the prominence of Buddhism at court and among the aristocracy and to the role it was alleged to have played in fomenting feuds. It is also ascribed to the wave of patriotism that accompanied the end of the rule of the Mongols. That rule had been extended over the country while the Mongols were masters of China, and in the popular mind seems to have been associated with Buddhism. Whatever the reasons, by royal command monasteries were closed in the capital and other cities and even in the villages. Monks and monasteries survived chiefly in remote fastnesses, notably in the Diamond Mountains. During the early stages of their occupation of Korea, after 1905, some of the Japanese sought to revive Buddhism and to modernize its methods, but they did not meet with striking success.



A Korean priest prepares to ring the four-hundred-year-old bell that calls worshipers to a temple in a small valley near Seoul.

Buddhism remained more vigorous in Japan than in China and Korea. Yet even here Buddhism, while prominent and counting many able and highly educated men among its monks, met opposition that weakened it. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Confucianism, especially in a form then prevailing in China, gained in strength. More and more Confucianism, rather than Buddhism, shaped the ethical ideals of the nation and captured the best minds. Increasingly, Buddhism was relegated to functions concerned with the future life and had its chief hold among the uneducated masses. Moreover, even among them, Buddhism was challenged by a revival of Shinto. This accompanied and was in part a result of a renewed study of Japanese history, which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the early part of the nineteenth century strengthened patriotism and brought a reaction against foreign importations. Buddhism was decried as being of alien origin. In 1868, after the Meiji Restoration, which in part sprang from this study of history and which ended the feudalism that had lasted for several centuries, Buddhism was disestablished. Shinto was formally separated from it, and one of its forms was given the support of the state. Buddhism thus lost the official backing that it had enjoyed since its introduction to the country, and in consequence many of its temples fell into disrepair. Yet it remained strong, especially in Kyoto and in the rural districts.

Buddhism at the Mid-Twentieth Century Mark

What, in the middle of the twentieth century, is the condition of Buddhism? We have seen that where it was introduced in lands already highly civilized, it either has died out, as in India, or has been declining for centuries. It is only among peoples who were in a primitive stage of culture when they accepted it—the Ceylonese, the Burmese, the Siamese, the Cambodians, the Tibetans, the Mongols, and the Japanese—that it has remained strong. For them, it proved a vehicle of high civilization. What can be said about its vitality at the time this book is being written, in the 1950's?

This question has already been partly answered. We have noted that among the non-Indian elements that constitute the large majority of the population of Ceylon, Buddhism is still potent. It does not promote much intellectual activity, and its vigor is associated with the tide of nationalism that is running strongly.

Likewise, in Burma it is associated with the nationalism of the numerically and politically dominant Burmese. That nationalism has

been flourishing because of the recent achievement of independence from the Japanese and from Britain. It seems to be all the more insistent because of the internal threats—from minorities such as the Karens and from the Communists. Here, as we have seen, there is a striking Buddhist revival. It is encouraged and financially underwritten by the government, partially as a deliberate attempt to counteract communism but also as an expression of positive religious conviction. The revival, we noted, is seen in part in a Pali university, in the production of literature, and in a world council of Buddhists being held from 1954 to 1956. It is as yet too early to know whether the revival will be more than temporary.

Thailand is also experiencing a Buddhist revival, although not so marked as that in Burma. It is seen in an enhanced publication and sale of Buddhist literature since World War II and in the growing use of radio for Buddhist sermons. There seems to be some awareness of the menace of communism, but the concern is limited and counter measures are not so numerous nor forceful as in Burma.

In Indochina, Buddhism has not been so vigorous as in Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand. It is still the prevailing religion of Cambodia, but it has not put forth so much fresh life as in the other countries that share with it the Hinayana faith. In Annam, the Mahayana has never been so strong as has Hinayana in Cambodia. However, in the present century it has contributed to two new movements that have both political and religious significance. One, Hao Hao, had as its founder a man who was assassinated in 1947. It began as a reformed Buddhism that sought to promote loyalty to the Buddha, the Buddhist law, and the Buddhist community, reverence for the ancestors, patriotism, and the welfare of the entire human race. During their occupation of the country, the Japanese sought to enlist it against the French. After their expulsion, it supported Viet Nam as against the Communist Vietminh. It became less and less religious and more and more political, and in 1951 its head was a soldier. The other movement, Caodai, is syncretistic, honoring the Buddha, the reputed founder of Taoism, Confucius, Jesus, and other great religious leaders. In some ways, it seems akin to theosophy. Professedly pacifist, in the disturbed condition of the land in the 1940's and 1950's it has an army and is resisting the Vietminh. It is growing, seeking to win converts in other lands, and is said to have sent a missionary to San Francisco.

For some years in the twentieth century, Buddhism in China was experiencing a revival. This was seen chiefly in certain centers. One of the outstanding leaders was the monk T'ai-hsü (1889-1947). He strove



The eighty-year-old Sanghanayaka, or President, of the Sixth World Buddhist Council to be held since the death of Buddha is seated on his golden throne in the man-made cave near Rangoon, Burma, where the Council convened.

About five thousand persons, including a number of distinguished guests, were in the cave for the opening day ceremonies.

Below is shown a section of the vast lay audience that was present.



to improve the quality of the monks, to reinterpret Buddhist doctrines so that they would be scientific and humanistic enough to spread around the world, and to use the large Buddhist properties for the benefit of the masses. Efforts were made, but with only fleeting success, to bring Buddhists together in national organizations. There was much printing and distribution of Buddhist literature. Laymen were active in this work, and Shanghai was a center. In Nanking, a Buddhist Institute, set up under the inspiration and direction of Ou-yang Ching-yu, engaged in scholarly research and the re-editing of Buddhist texts, especially those of Weishih, a subtle system of idealistic philosophy that had been brought in by a famous Chinese pilgrim during the T'ang Dynasty. In several centers, Young Men's Buddhist Associations were organized, obviously inspired in part by the presence of Young Men's Christian Associations. After the onset of the Japanese invasion in 1937, relief to the sufferers was carried on under the leadership of a Buddhist abbot.

Moreover, in addition to the revival and largely apart from it, there were great monasteries where discipline was maintained, study and meditation pursued, and the services conducted with dignity and decorum.

However, in Chinese Buddhism as a whole, the decline that had been in progress for many years was not halted.

The civil strife that accompanied and followed the end of the Confucian monarchy, the fighting and banditry that punctuated most of the subsequent years, the secularism and at times antireligious sentiment under the Republic, and the Japanese invasion of the 1930's and 1940's bore heavily on Buddhism. Many Buddhist temples and monasteries were occupied by troops. Some were destroyed. Others were turned into schools. Much of the land with which Buddhist institutions were endowed was confiscated and its proceeds turned to other purposes.

The triumph of communism dealt additional blows. In the attack on landlordism and in the redistribution of land that have been part of the program of that regime, the remaining temple properties seem to have been largely expropriated. Monks and nuns are regarded as social parasites and are required to engage in what the Communists think of as productive labor on farms and factories. Since the Communist regime has professed to be tolerant of religion, it has permitted some of the temples to remain open. Yet Communists regard Buddhism, along with other religions, as superstition, and their policies have greatly weakened it.

In Outer Mongolia, the Lamaistic Buddhism derived from Tibet



New Jersey Buddhists greet a Tibetan Lama who fled from communism and was brought to the U. S. by Church World Service.

was dominant and substantial numbers of its manhood were enrolled in the monastic ranks. Due to influence and pressure from the U.S.S.R., in 1921 a regime favorable to Communist Russia was set up. It adopted leftist policies. Among them was the confiscation and transfer to collectives of some of the herds upon which the monasteries depended. The collectives did not succeed, and a reaction against them occurred. However, late in the 1940's, an effort to revive them was made. It is difficult to determine exactly what has happened to the Buddhism of Outer Mongolia in the 1950's. Presumably, it is suffering but survives.

Until the occupation by the Chinese Communists, Tibet, remote from the revolutionary changes of the rest of the world, went on its way with its life but little disturbed. With that occupation in 1950, changes began. Yet at the time these lines are written, so far as the outer world can know, Buddhism retains its hold. It is too strong to be dislodged quickly. How far it will be weakened by the new order is not yet clear.

The Buddhism of Japan continues to be more vigorous than does that of China or Korea. This is in spite of the adverse developments during the past three and a half centuries and the urbanization and industrialization of millions, which has brought about a weakening



Buddhists from displaced persons camps have converted an old garage at Freewood Acres, New Jersey, into "Happiness Temple."

among them of traditional religious observances. Buddhism suffered from the destruction of some of its temples in the bombings of World War II. Since most of the temples and monasteries are in mountains, rural sections, and centers, such as Kyoto, that were spared in the bombings, the physical destruction was not great. More serious has been the breaking up of large landed estates under the Allied occupation and their redistribution among small peasant proprietors. Since the endowments of temples and monasteries have largely been in lands, this has brought serious financial problems to Buddhist institutions. However, Buddhism continues to flourish. In many places before the war, it was seeking to adapt its methods to the new conditions. Young Men's Buddhist Associations were formed. Programs of religious education and forms of public worship with preaching and hymns have been modeled on or adapted from what has been seen in Christian, especially Protestant, churches.

After World War II and especially after the end of the Occupation, Japanese Buddhism has displayed something of a revival. In 1952, two Buddhist world conferences were held, with active Japanese participation. The Zen, Pure Land, and Shingon sects have shown themselves to be very much alive. Nichiren Buddhism is particularly flourishing.

It has an appeal for plain, simple folk. It has a marked pacifist trend that has given it a hearing among the many who fear rearmament and the recrudescence of militarism.

As one reviews the condition of Buddhism at mid-twentieth century, he is impressed with the fact that the decline of the faith that has been striking for several hundred years has not been halted. Buddhism has never regained the ground that it lost in the land of its birth. Not since the major period of conversions among the Mongols four hundred years or more ago has it made substantial territorial gains. No major new school nor sect has arisen since that inspired by Tsong-kha-pa early in the fifteenth century. There is still vitality. In the present century, it has displayed itself in such widely scattered countries as Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, China, and Japan. Yet the present century has also seen losses, some of them very serious. They have been particularly notable in China and Outer Mongolia. The spread of communism accounts for some but not all of them. Buddhism is by no means dead. It is still a religious force in the lives of millions. Nor does it give indication of early disappearance. Yet, measured by centuries, it is a waning factor in the ongoing life of mankind.

Buddhism and Christianity

What can be said of the relation of Buddhism to Christianity? In what ways, if any, do the two resemble each other? Wherein do they differ? What advances has either made into territories once held by the other? What is the present status of Buddhist missions among traditionally Christian peoples? How successful are Christian missions among peoples of Buddhist faith?

As can be seen even in the cursory account of the preceding pages, in some respects Buddhism and Christianity appear to have common features. The ethical standards they inculcate have many similarities. Both enjoin truth-speaking and chastity. Both decry theft, loose sex relations, luxury, and gluttony. Great branches of the Christian church agree with Buddhism in exalting the unmarried state and the poverty of the individual as contrasted with matrimony and private possessions. Mahayana Buddhism, with its belief in heavens and hells with future rewards and punishments, seems singularly akin to Christian views of the future life. Its teaching of those who have postponed entering nirvana to make possible the salvation of all living beings somewhat resembles the Christian doctrine of vicarious suffering. The Amitabha cults, with their emphasis on salvation by faith, seem so similar to

Christianity, and especially to Protestantism, that several scholars have sought to trace their origin to contact with the Nestorian Christianity that for several centuries was widespread in Central Asia. Some have even said that much of Buddhism in China and Japan is Christianity in disguise. The inner peace reflected in many of the statues of the Buddha and seen in the disciplined lives of numbers of Buddhists appears to be akin to that which Christians experience as one of the fruits of the Spirit. In both faiths, there is a reverence for life. With these many similarities, are not the differences superficial and negligible? Cannot noble spirits in both Buddhism and Christianity find so much in common that they can learn from one another? Why should Christians present the gospel to Buddhists in the hope that the latter will accept it? This has been said by many, among them some who bear the Christian name.

Yet the preceding pages should have made evident that the basic differences that separate Buddhism and Christianity are so clear cut and so great that no reconciliation can be effected that does not do such violence to one or both that they are deprived of their fundamental teachings. As we have seen, at its outset Buddhism declared that life is not worth living, for life is inseparable from suffering. Salvation consists in being rid of the desire or thirst that holds together the entity that is born and reborn. This is to be accomplished in part by coming to recognize what the Buddha held to be true, namely, that the self is only a continually changing combination of states of mind such as feeling and perception. Salvation is to be achieved by one's own efforts. Others may help one to find the way to salvation, and the fellowship of the likeminded can aid one in its pursuit, but in the last analysis each must achieve it for himself. The gods cannot assist him, for they, like himself, are in the chain of births and rebirths. The goal, so Gautama said, is nirvana. He did not say what happens after physical death to one who has followed faithfully the road that leads to nirvana. Presumably he did not believe that he knew. He was sure that it meant the end of desire and was akin to blowing out a candle, but beyond this he seems to have been unprepared to go.

Contrast this with the Christian gospel. At its very core are the affirmations that God exists, that he has always existed and will always exist, that he is love, that herein is love, not that we loved him but that he loved us and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and that he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Again and again, Christ spoke of the goal as life. He came not that

In Laos, merriment
overcomes water-throwing
women and their happy victims
as they observe an
old New Year's Day custom.
Water is thrown
at Buddhist priests as a
sign of purification.



men might rid themselves of life but that they might have life and might have it more abundantly. True life is to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. In his Father's house are many mansions—"abiding places"—and he went to the Father with the promise to come again and to receive his disciples unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also. While Christ enjoined men to strive to enter the narrow gate that leads to life and Paul exhorted Christians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, Christ declared that the Father gives his kingdom, with the implication that no one can earn it, and Paul stoutly affirmed that we are saved by grace, that the free gift of God is eternal life, and that it is God who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Moreover, the Christian faith centers about One who is God made flesh, who came in history, was born, lived, was crucified, was raised from the dead, and ever lives.

What contrasts could be greater! On the one hand are many gods, subject, like men, to change and to births and rebirths. On the other is one God, eternal, almighty. On the one hand, salvation is thought of as the end of births and rebirths. On the other hand, it is revealed as eternal life, to be entered by a single new birth. To be sure, for millions of Buddhists heavens of bliss and hells of punishment have all but



supplanted nirvana, but to the Buddhist who is well educated in the faith, nirvana continues to be the goal. The greatest contrast is that Buddhism frankly rests on the achievement of men and that the gospel is the self-revelation of God, the action of God in history in one who is both God and man and continuing through God the Holy Spirit.

Both Buddhism and Christianity cannot be true. Christians must be grateful for whatever in Buddhism is akin to their faith and for lives that, judged by Christian standards, are noble. Yet, if they are adequately informed on both Buddhism and the gospel, they must be aware of striking, basic, and irreconcilable contradictions.

It may seem an anticlimax to point to other ways in which Buddhism and Christianity are different. Yet they may have a deeper significance than at first appears. One is in the history of their spread. We have seen that the territorial expansion of Buddhism was accomplished almost entirely in the first two millenniums of its history, that retreat was begun something more than a thousand years ago, first in the land of its birth, and that, in spite of advances on some fronts, that retreat has continued, in some areas accelerated in the twentieth century. Moreover, Buddhism became the religion of the entire community only among peoples who, when it arrived, held to primitive cults.

Among high civilizations it never succeeded in fully displacing the systems that had preceded it.

In contrast, Christianity's first great territorial expansion was in the Mediterranean world while that was ruled by the Roman Empire, in an area of as high a civilization as mankind had at that time achieved. There within five hundred years, Christianity displaced all its rivals except a minority who held to Judaism. Subsequently in the course of several centuries, it lost about half that territory to a younger religion, Islam, a faith that in some countries has also supplanted Buddhism. Yet it still remains the professed religion of the peoples of about half of what was once the Roman Empire and has not, as has Buddhism, all but disappeared in the region of its birth. Moreover, while from time to time Christianity has lost ground and has vanished from some areas, and while it has been challenged in regions of its greatest strength, notably in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, its time of greatest geographic expansion has been the past 450 years, and especially the past century and a half. At mid-twentieth century, it is more widely spread and is more deeply rooted among more peoples than it or any other religion has ever been. In other words, unlike Buddhism, which had only slight extensions after its twentieth century and which never gained a substantial number of adherents outside of South, Central, and East Asia, in its own twentieth century Christianity is world-wide and is continuing its geographical expansion.

Still another difference between Buddhism and Christianity is in the realm of creativity. As measured by new schools or sects, fresh philosophies, and new forms of action, by the end of its first fourteen centuries, the former had begun to be stagnant. In contrast, the latter has continued to give birth to new movements and has never been more creative than in the past century and a half. In its sixteenth century, Protestantism emerged from within it and dynamic new orders and reforms sprang from its Roman Catholic wing. In its eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were the evangelical awakening and the beginnings of the great revivals in the United States. In the nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church gave birth to more new orders and societies than in any other century of its history, and from Protestantism came movement after movement, including the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations and the beginnings of the Ecumenical Movement. Then, too, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there have been born from Christianity, especially Protestantism, numbers of social reforms and organizations to meet the

chronic ills of mankind. Among them have been much of the social legislation in Great Britain, triumphant antislavery action in Great Britain and the United States, the great efforts to eliminate alcoholism, and the Red Cross. The twentieth century has seen fresh theological currents in Protestantism, the rapid growth of the Ecumenical Movement, and the impulse that gave birth to the League of Nations and then to the United Nations.

In these last sentences, another contrast is seen between Buddhism and Christianity. Buddhism has to its credit many humanitarian achievements; it has fostered kindness, a care for all life, deeds of mercy, and good works of many kinds. Yet Christianity has been the source of far more movements and measures to fight chronic evils and improve the lot of mankind than has Buddhism. It has not succeeded in restraining Christian nations from waging war, but Buddhism has also failed in eliminating this evil among its adherents. Christianity has been the motivating impetus behind antislavery campaigns, public health drives, relief activities in behalf of sufferers of war, and the establishment of the nursing profession. It has been responsible for the building of institutions to care for the mentally ill, hospitals, schools and universities, and for the reduction of more languages to writing than can be ascribed to all other forces put together.

Christianity is both other-worldly and this-worldly. It opens the door to eternal life. More than any other religion, it has made life this side of the grave richer. That is partly because it has taught that eternal life may and should begin here and now and that it shows itself in active love of neighbors as well as God.

Moreover, as is to be expected, in the interior graces of meditation and prayer Christianity is not a whit behind Buddhism. Indeed, it is richer. That is because, with its belief in the existence and self-giving love of God, it holds as its goal the life that centers about and culminates in the beatific vision of God, in eternal and growing fellowship with him.

Christianity has won far more converts from Buddhism than Buddhism has won from Christianity. Here and there, however, a few Christians have become Buddhists, including some in the twentieth century. Christians are a minority in Buddhist Ceylon and even smaller minorities among the Buddhist Burmese, Thai, and Cambodians. Yet the combined Christian communities of these lands number well over a million. Most of the millions in China and the hundreds of thousands in Korea and Japan who have become Christians have had Buddhism as one of their faiths.

summary

Buddhism, one of the oldest and most widely spread religions, is the outgrowth of efforts to grapple with basic problems of human existence. Why are evil and suffering so intimately intertwined with our lives? How can we escape from them? It started with basic assumptions it accepted from the Hinduism of its day—the seemingly endless succession of births and rebirths, karma that determines one's lot, and the possibility in each new incarnation of modifying one's karma for good or for ill. Life as so conceived is not worth living. Salvation consists in breaking that tragic succession. Gautama, the Buddha, the Enlightened, believed that he had done this. It was his discovery and achievement.

Through many years of teaching, he sought to pass it on to others. Presumably it is within the reach of all who will pay the price in the discipline of right thought and action. It consists of viewing life as Gautama believed that it is—the constantly changing self, the fact that life and suffering are inseparable, the origin of suffering in desire, the possibility of escape from suffering through the elimination of desire, and the eightfold road through which that emancipation can be achieved. The goal is nirvana, where desire has been mastered, and so the tie that has held together this entity called "I" has been dissolved.

This way of salvation, devised in North India, probably in the sixth century before Christ, spread widely. Its extension was chiefly southward, northward, and eastward, rather than westward. Among some peoples, it became the dominant, almost the only religion. That was true especially among the Ceylonese, the Burmese, the people of what is now Thailand, the Tibetans, and the Mongols. In most of the largest populations where it gained a footing, it was only one religion among

others. That was the case in India, China, Korea, Japan, the East Indies, and Annam.

In the course of its history, Buddhism experienced striking developments. It divided into two wings. Hinayana, "the Lesser Vehicle," more nearly than the other approximates to what was given by Gautama and holds, as he did, that salvation is by one's own efforts. Mahayana, "the Greater Vehicle," teaches that there have been those who, with nirvana just ahead, refused to enter it until they had made possible the salvation of all living beings.

Within both major divisions, and especially within Mahayana, schools or sects arose that have given variety to the religion. For the majority of Buddhists, whether in Hinayana or in Mahayana, the faith is held to be the way to a radiantly happy existence after death. For some, this is what is meant by nirvana. For others, it is to be had in one or another of many heavens, and nirvana has fallen into the background. To millions, this entrance to heaven is to be attained by faith in one of the Buddhas. Always there have been those, generally a small minority, who have wrestled profoundly with the issues raised by Buddhism and who, accepting what they have believed to be the tenets of its founder, have gone on from there, often to conclusions that have differed from at least some of Gautama's teachings.

Buddhism has experienced other developments. Beginning with one who gave no place to prayer, either of adoration or of petition, it ultimately had both forms. Mahayana presents many beings whom it adores and to whom its adherents go for succor. Some of them are Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, usually mythical, and some are Hindu gods. Elaborate rituals arose. Buddhism stimulated the emergence of art, architecture, and an enormous literature. From it have issued works of mercy. Many of those who have drunk deeply from it have lived lives that, judged either by its own or by Christian standards, have been noble.

Basically, Buddhism has been in striking contrast with the gospel. The goal of its founder and of those best instructed in it is nirvana, the blowing out of the candle that is the individual as we know the individual. It is salvation from life. That salvation is to be achieved by one's own knowledge and effort. The gospel, far from teaching a salvation that is the blowing out of a candle, tells of a new birth into a life that is one of growing richness in love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control. The gospel centers about God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe, God who is love and whose love has led him, in his Son, to become flesh for man's

salvation, and who continues in the lives of men through his Holy Spirit. The gospel is not man's achievement but is the good news of the gift of God, of the unceasing divine initiative. Moreover, Buddhism has been a regional faith and for centuries has been a waning force in the life of mankind, while Christianity, which has arisen from the gospel, continues to spread and break barriers of regionalism to become world-wide.



Buddhists of all ages take part in the revival of an ancient religious observance, the Kannon Festival, in Tokyo.

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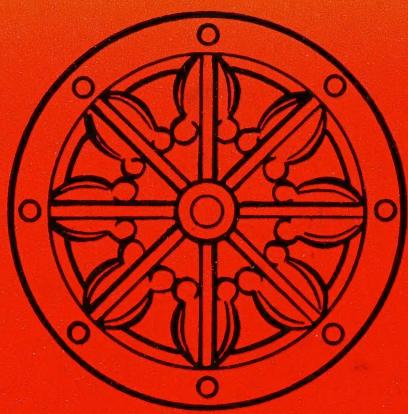
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